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SUBJECT: DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS CONTINUES CRITICISM OF MONUC

REFS: A) KINSHASA 172 B) KINSHASA 128

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

MSF: MONUC Should Be More Pro-active

¶2. (SBU) PolCouns and PolOff recently met with Doctors Without Borders ("MSF: Medecins Sans Frontieres") to discuss Operation Lightning Thunder (OLT) in Haut Uele District. Hakim Chkam, MSF Witness Protection Officer, echoed recent public criticism (ref B) of MONUC's lack of civilian protection capabilities against LRA reprisals. Chkam maintained that even taking into account MONUC's minimal resources on the ground, the UN organization "was not doing enough." For example, MONUC carries out no patrols, which it regularly does in North Kivu. In addition, MONUC remains almost exclusively at its base outside of Dungu (ref A). MONUC, according to Chkam, should be more pro-active, for instance, in helping to repair and secure critical road axes in the area from Dungu, Faradje, and Doruma. Chkam stressed that just because MONUC had not been involved in the planning stage of OLT, this was not an excuse for inaction in protecting civilians.

¶3. (SBU) Chkam said that, while the magnitude of LRA attacks had diminished, the group continued to launch small-scale attacks almost daily. The remaining LRA elements, while dispersed, are, in Chkam's opinion, "stronger than ever." Self-defense groups have sprung up throughout the area, most notably in Dungu and Bagandi. When the UPDF withdraws from the DRC, Chkam predicted that MONUC and the FARDC would attempt to launch a Rudia II. Chkam praised the behavior of FARDC and Republican Guard stationed in the region, noting the DRC forces were not predatory. However, he added that they were also not active in protecting the civilian population.

¶4. (SBU) Chkam said that OLT was employing the same tactics that were used during Operation Iron Fist against the LRA. While the operation had disrupted LRA communications capabilities and reduced supplies, the LRA was bidding its time, brutalizing the local population and increasing recruiting efforts.

Humanitarian Situation

¶5. (SBU) Chkam characterized the humanitarian situation as deteriorating. The local population was unable to access fields due to the fear of LRA reprisals. Food reserves had therefore dropped, and hospitals continued to be targets, as the LRA seeks to obtain medical supplies.

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